

# Around the House with Firsty



January 2012

## Our Services Include:

Replacement  
Windows  
Vinyl Siding  
Sunrooms  
Cabinet Refacing  
Hurricane Shutters  
Bathroom Remodels

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## Five Home-improvement Ideas for the New Year

It's a good time to write out your list of home-improvement resolutions for 2012. Do the math and figure out how much you can afford to spend on your home this year. Then, make room for these five important home-improvement recommendations:

### 1. **Secure your home. Don't wait until someone breaks in before finding the peace of mind that comes with knowing you've done everything you can to keep intruders out of your home.**

While most of the steps you need to take can be performed by a handyman or security professional, there are a few you can do yourself. Start by increasing the visibility of your windows from the street by cutting down shrubs and bushes, so intruders have no place to hide/secure home. Replace door locks at any access points to your home. Leaving outdoor lights on overnight or installing motion-detection sensors can also help ward off bad guys.

A handyman can help with the following:

- Building a hidden safe into a wall or floor.
- Upgrading single-pane to double-pane windows with security glass.
- Adding metal screen doors or decorative wrought-iron gates (they provide security while adding value to your home).
- Covering up unused doggie doors or replacing them with a secure, locking version.
- Installing solid-core doors or sturdy steel models to replace hollow entry doors.
- Cutting a mail slot into your door instead of using an outdoor mailbox (preventing thieves from stealing checks and credit card numbers) and drilling a peep hole into your front door if you don't already have one. A security professional can install an alarm or upgrade your current system to include some of the exciting innovations in smart-home automation. Together with a few well-placed exterior and interior cameras, you can easily monitor the action around your home while you're away by simply taking a look at the screen of your smartphone, notebook or iPad.

While it used to be a luxury of only the very wealthy, mobile home security monitoring is now within reach of any homeowner.

### 2. **Resolve to recycle. One man's trash is another man's treasure. Salvaging second-hand materials before they reach the landfill not only helps the environment, but can also save you money.**

More builders, remodelers and homeowners are recognizing the great opportunity that using salvaged building materials can present. Often, these second-hand treasures cost far less -- and come with more character and whimsy -- than similar accessories you could buy new.

Always recycle or reuse leftover lumber, misfit windows and doors, scrap metal and spare masonry materials.



*“...officials  
voted to boost  
energy savings  
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and renovation  
by 30%.”*

**-New Year- New  
Changes**

**3. Get a permit. You might be aware you need to get a permit to add a new addition to your house, but you may be surprised to learn that other more simple improvements also require permits. Anything you mess with in your home -- including electricity, plumbing or structural changes -- will most likely require a permit.**

It's safe to say, before you start any home-improvement project, you should check with your municipality.

**4. Stay up to code. While you're not required to update your house as codes change, you may want to consider doing it for safety's sake, especially if your home was built before 2000. If you're considering doing some remodeling or additions, it's never a bad idea. While there are probably hundreds of outdated codes an older home faces, voluntarily upgrading a few can save you money and keep your home safe:**

- Hard-wired smoke alarms in every bedroom and in the hallway outside of sleeping areas.
- Ground-fault circuit interrupter receptacles in the bathrooms, kitchen, laundry room, garage and any other space where both water and electricity are available.
- Powerful and efficient toilets to replace old, water-guzzling ones.
- Larger, dual-pane, windows -- with at least 3.5 feet of open, removable area -- big enough for a firefighter and his air tank to fit through.
- Handrails on all staircases -- indoors and out.
- A water heater expansion tank, which can prevent extra pressure and the possibility of an explosion.

**5. Prep for rain. Take some precautions to make sure your home stays protected from a beating by rain storms.**

You can start by plugging leaks in the roof and trimming branches that are close to the house. Your windows and doors are equally at risk of causing problems during a storm if they let water get inside.

If you have a skylight, check to see whether there are any weep holes that need to be sealed, as the caulking only lasts a few years. If you need to reseal any areas, make sure you remove all the old and cracked caulk completely before adding a new layer. Use a polyurethane caulk, which will ward off the wet better than acrylic or latex.

Replace worn-out door sweeps so water doesn't come through the bottom. Also, change hinges and door locks if they're preventing the door from latching securely.

By ROSIE ROMERO from The Arizona Republic

## New Year –New Changes

2012 will bring some new rules and regulations to home improvements. On November 1, 2010, building officials voted to boost energy savings in construction and renovation by 30%. These changes took effect on January 1, 2012. The new goal is to make changes to homes today that will significantly cut energy use for years to come. This is called, “Life Cycle Energy Savings” versus trade offs (i.e.

substituting one energy efficiency to allow leeway on another less efficient use) which have been approved in the past.

Some of these new regulations include:  
-Making sure new homes are better sealed to reduce heating & cooling loss  
-Increasing insulation in ceilings, walls & foundation,  
-Decreasing air leakage in HVAC distribution systems -  
-Insulating hot water piping

-Boosting lighting efficiency.

Each of these changes will only be made to new homes or when home improvements including these areas are affected.

The last change helps improve homeowner's knowledge of energy efficiency. Builders must complete a post certificate that includes results of all energy efficiency testing done to the home and a list of the current requirements instituted in this new bill.

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### We're on the Web!

See us at:

[www.1stchoice-  
homeimprovements.com](http://www.1stchoice-homeimprovements.com)

## Meet Our Staff



Justin Mercer has been an installer with 1<sup>st</sup> Choice for several years. He joined our company right out of high school and has been

part of our family ever since! When asked what he installs, he smiled and said, "Something different everyday!" He is a trusted employee and is utilized where ever he is needed.

He recently received a letter complimenting his effort from one of our clients. Our customer wrote, "...but we would particularly like to compliment Justin Mercer. His work was outstanding and professional and just

as importantly, Jackie trusted him to be in and out of the house on a routine basis. This was comforting to me having been so far away. He is obviously a skilled craftsman and we would certainly like to have him involved in any projects we undertake in the future"

1<sup>st</sup> Choice is proud to have an employee like Justin and feel privileged to have him working for our company.

## *About Our Organization...*

When Steve Smart and Scott McCartney incorporated their company, 1st Choice Home Improvements, Inc in July of 1999, they brought over thirty-five years of combined experience from working for a national home improvement company. Their dream became a plan

and now over 12 years later they continue to be identified as one of the premier home improvement companies in the United States. The Home Improvement Industry journal, "Qualified Remodeler" has honored 1st Choice as one of the top 500 companies in the United States for 7 years. The

Northwest Florida Better Business Bureau has given 1<sup>st</sup> Choice an A+ rating in addition to their business accreditation rating. We are proud to have received this honor for over 12 years.

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